

On this particular morning, we decided to head back into the hills of the Zambezi Escarpment looking for more elephant and hopefully some solitary old buffalo bulls — “Dugga Boys.” It was the dry season and temperatures at midday would routinely push the red over 100° F. The going was tough up in the hills and we had already logged in over 250 Kilometers walking according to Ivan’s records. I had heat-stroked once early on in the trip and was now constantly preoccupied with gulping copious amounts of H<sub>2</sub>O to prevent another kidney-wrenching, fever-chills episode! Humping around a 15.5-pound .600 Nitro and it’s ammo will test your endurance...but it’s well worth the trouble when you get to cut loose with the monster and witness first hand its devastating power!

As we were traversing the base of a huge mesa-like mountain one of the trackers, Powaman, banged on the Landcruiser’s cab — he had spotted something across the valley from the mesa. There, approximately a mile and a half away, standing on a rocky hillside stood a lone buffalo bull. How Powaman saw the thing

is beyond me. Ivan and I strained to see him using our binos. He was far enough off that we were in fact unable to judge his horn size and quality. However, experience has taught us that one should never pass up an opportunity to put in a stalk on a Dugga Boy. These old bush warriors are a breed unto their own. Living a mostly solitary life and having to fend for themselves without the added safety that the herd provides they become very keen and aggressive, animals. These are the oldest of the bulls. Most Duggas grow to a very large body size as their primary focus on life is eating and defending themselves from lion attacks — they are the Gladiators of the buffalo kind.

We made a plan. Using a gray rock outcrop as our bearing we began the stalk. It was mid morning and already the heat was getting up there. What looked like a straightforward one- to two-mile stalk became a bit more than we had anticipated. The terrain was challenging as we crossed over and through several hills and deep gorges to get into where we had last seen him. As we moved up what we thought would be the

final hillside we spotted him a few hundred yards away resting under a large Acacia tree. After a quick glassing, we decided that he looked good and we initiated the final approach. Thus far he had not spotted us. Wind was a major concern. Earlier in the safari the fickle spring winds had confounded us on several occasions, but today the wind gods were a bit more cooperative. As we moved in, we found yet another steep drop before we could actually get into position for a shot. We dropped into the steep arroyo losing sight of the old boy.

Coming up the other side I was full of adrenalin, as I knew we would be within a hundred yards of him and anything could happen. He could have winded us and moved off maybe straight downhill to us, maybe to the left or right. Although buffalo don’t generally charge unprovoked, these old boys are capable of anything. In the back of my mind I was thinking about the PH in the concession next to ours that a couple of days earlier was inexplicably charged, run over and was saved a severe horning by his binos — a few broken / bruised ribs were the only damage.

Even when carrying a .600, blindly walking uphill on to a potentially very dangerous animal tends to make one get a bit imaginative! It was just a few seconds more and we had him in sight — there 50 yards away he was right where we last saw him — still facing down hill to the right. The terrain had leveled off and Ivan signaled for me to take the lead. The plan was simple...swiftly move on to him, he would stand up and for a microsecond and I would have a perfect broadside shoulder shot. I rushed in. At about 25 yards he stood up, looked at me and was about to bolt. I cut loose one of the 900-grain Woodleigh softs and smacked him square on the lower shoulder.

Having the downhill advantage, he made for cover with Ivan and me in hot pursuit. He was hit pretty solid so we were able to overtake him in seconds. I reloaded on the

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